

National Consultation in preparation of 10<sup>th</sup> World Assembly Religions for Peace  
Utrecht, May 11, 2019

## CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Circle Sessions: **Peace and (dis)armament**

Moderator: Hafsa Chairi

**Session 1** mainly focused on the threat of the current political constellations and situations.

It started out with the statement that our first commitment should be the safeguarding of the future by protection of the planet and by active disarmament.

While discussing we came to the realization that the countries of power and their populace currently are ignoring most of these problems.

In that respect Lindau should be a turning point. No longer living by the adage “if you want peace, prepare for war”, but *preparing for peace* to obtain peace. “*Ci vis pacem para pacem.*”

We stressed the need to concentrate on *just peace* instead of just war. We need a fundamental change of attitudes. *We should advocate nuclear disarmament and say no to the arms race.*

We should stop greeting people with one hand while clutching a rock in the other. That madness should stop. No longer holding on the fallacy of reciprocity. My rock is no better than your rock. We shouldn't have one in the first place.

We need to foster the change already happening and steer it towards just peace.

The current protest is against *perceived injustice* but has no common direction. We need to come together around the beauty of life, the common Good shared between the religions and start with the positives of life to shape the future.

All this threw up the questions of motivation. We have a strong will to survive. What is our motivation in all this? Are we motivated by fear? We partly are, but we need to work from hope. Our common goals should be rooted in looking for hope and a greater ambition to achieve peace. Lindau could be a turning point when we take the outcomes back to our communities. Lindau should be empowering these processes of positive change. We should take the opportunity to harness the presence of the German government organs to obtain that goal.

**Session 2** focused more on the human aspects of war and the damage of violence.

The starting point here was the question “What is peace”? *Peace is not the absence of war, but we need to approach it from mutual goodwill and hope.* This led to the question “How can we

obtain a weapon free world?" One answer was "We need to free children from the burden of our past and challenge them to find ways and means to get there."

On the question how the youth thinks about (nuclear) weapons, our 14 yr. old attendee answered: "Young ones often think weapons are stout! Some find it normal to have weapons. People blame it on games. We hear the VS tell Iran: "We'll bomb your country. I'm worried about that. I have friends and family there. They <the countries> want to frighten each other. It's because of fear. When you have weapons you have power."

This led to a discussion of *the influence of violence in popular culture*, especially in games of all stripes. This led to a number of very interesting observations as noted below.

The preference for violent games comes not only from the life stories of the players, it also might arise by the present culture in which having power over others is being presented as a purpose in life.

We see a hardening in society and expressions of violence among (young) people, who have problems with making a distinction between the virtual and the real. Youngsters are not always aware of abnormalities in (their) reality. It's important to treat them right, to feed them hope and be a better example for them.

How do we give hope when we are overwhelmed by the opposite? By questioning the status quo? Can religions offer perspectives? We need to find a common perspective. Are we reformists and abolish one category of violence or are we revolutionary and abolish all?

Soon this led to the question for our authority and influence. How powerful is Religions for Peace in achieving those goals?

The world structures are shifting, but the military industrial complex still makes gains out of their products at the expense of the poorest countries.

Can we use the same strategies for the opposite goals, that is, to promote peace? Can we be one step ahead of the warmongers in promoting peace? What role can Lindau play in this? We need to see practical change.

Stein Villumstad answered this by explaining how in the recent past RfP played a role in the land mine treaties, the prohibition of cluster weaponry, the restrictions on illegal small arms.

He also stressed how much the involvement of youth is key to the process of change.

"We need to get down what is doable, both on communal level and on personal level. That needs coordination. We need to break down the elephant." By which he meant that we need to stop being overwhelmed by the size and threat of the problem, we need to tackle the part in our reach. One might tackle the tail, another might get a group together to deal with the trunk and so on. In closing we concluded that the status quo is often based on fear. (Be it 'in the mind' or in 'practice'.) That's why the military superpowers keep building bigger weaponry to keep the advantage. It is very hard to overcome fear.

Izzy Mansour  
RfP Board Member

## **Recommendations:**

1. Our first commitment as world religions and philosophies of life, united in Lindau, aimed at our stewardship on earth, should be the safeguarding of mankind now and tomorrow and the protection of the planet with all living creatures by active nuclear disarmament and a strong NO to the renewed arms race.
2. We should present a powerful call for a radical change in thinking about freedom and safety in this nuclear era. The classical adage: 'If you want peace, prepare for war!' is outdated. For the survival of humanity is now needed: '*If you want peace, prepare actually for peace.*' 'Ci vis pacem, para pacem.'
3. The present direction of increasing armament involves unacceptable risks. The control of the apocalyptic destructive power is not in the least secured (complexity, control-command, artificial intelligence). 'Prepare for peace' doesn't only include the prevention of military conflicts, but also the need of a common approach of the large world-problems, like poverty, clean water, lack of safe and healthy food, huge inequality...
4. Safety can no longer be realized at the expense of others. Today applies: '*I can only be safe if you don't feel threatened by me.*' This is mutual. It's about Mutual Assured Security: 'MAS instead of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction)'. This is an intermediate step to the global concept of common security.
5. The excessive high global military expenses didn't contribute to a greater safety, but to the opposite: more unsafety. Moreover, they deduct vital means to the approach of urgent world problems.
6. As religions and philosophies of life we have treasures in our Holy Books for self-reflection and needed social behavior, like acting truthful, with compassion, with care for others. We'd better propagate these values that we share with each other from different believes. They'll make us better promoters of peace.
7. Everything that happens on worldwide scale is comparable to our small-scale daily life. The only difference is the scale. So, if we want to walk the path of peace, we have to start with ourselves: our (self)confidence, our thoughts, our words, our deeds. Work on those to become the best role model one can wish.
8. Let's detox ourselves from negative thoughts, harsh words, judgements, prejudices and open our hearts, arms and hands to the other, who has a similar longing for peace as we do and let's cooperate for reducing the above-mentioned problems (3.). We can do this, worldwide in our communities.
9. We could challenge filmmakers and game-developers to develop games with enough 'tension and sensation' in positive ways to balance the games variety better.

*More recommendations you'll find at the Peace and Education session.*